***It's Riveting!***

by **Cheryl M. Sigmon**

Many of you have tried the activity called RIVET which serves so many purposes in a Four-Blocks classroom. After conversations with teachers lately, I want to clarify some important points about this activity, and share some adaptations to RIVET for those of you who might want to try it a new way. So, even if you think you know all about RIVET, please read on…

RIVET is a powerful activity that is used most often in Guided Reading Block during the prereading segment and also occasionally in the Words Block to review words. RIVET is a game somewhat like Hangman, except that there is an important difference. The similarity with Hangman is that we share the number of spaces in the word we're exploring and that the game involves guessing. However, the greatest difference is that we **don't let students make random guesses about letters that might be in the mystery word**. Instead, students must guess the whole word. Even though during this activity the word is spelled, it's not the spelling that's most important. It's that students' attention will be "riveted" on the word, letters and patterns that might make up the word; that there is a connection between the words and the text; and that the meaning is important. If students are allowed to make random guesses (picture Vana White flipping those letters---give me an "e"…), then they don't have to think so hard about words with meanings that might have a connection to the text.

First of all in planning for a successful RIVET activity, the teacher should choose vocabulary words that are critical to the comprehension of the story and that might be useful to students in their future writing and reading. Usually 3-5 words a day are taught or reviewed. RIVET can be used to introduce a story, especially if the words are in students' listening vocabulary. My usual use for RIVET is to review words that have been introduced on a previous day.

For example, as a second day activity to review the story *Why Spiders Have Eight Legs* by Katherine Mead, a round of RIVET might start with



To get students started, the teacher gives the first letter as a clue:



Then the teacher invites students to make reasonable guesses about this 7 letter word that starts with an "s" that is important to the story they've read. Most students might hazard that "spiders" is the word. "That's a great guess," the teacher might say, being pleased that the guess has this direct connection to the text. So, the teacher asks the students, "If the word is spider, what should the next letter be?" At this point---and throughout the attempted spelling of the word---the teacher never confirms that the word offered by the students is either correct or incorrect. If students say "p" is the next letter, the teacher merely says, "Well, let's see what my next letter is." Then, she adds the next letter…



With that next addition, the teacher asks, "Boys and girls, can our word be 'spider'?" At this point, the students must decide if spider can possibly start with se. If they respond "yes," then the teacher asks what the next letter should be, and hopes that they'll figure out that it doesn't spell spider with the next letter. If the students respond "No," then the teacher will ask, "What other word do you think related to our text and starts with an "se"?

This procedure is followed---letter by letter---until the word is finally revealed:



After the word has been revealed, the meaning of the word is discussed, and its connection to the text is made. Meaning and connection are really the purpose of this activity, along with helping students to be able to decode the words for the re-reading of the text.